

**SPECIAL MEETING  
CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL  
400 PHENIX AVENUE**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2005**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2005**

**BOTH SESSIONS BEGIN AT 4:30 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**A public budget work session of the Cranston School Committee was held on Wednesday, May 25, 2005 at Western Hills Middle School with the following members present: Mr. Archetto (arrived at 5:40 p.m.), Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi (arrived at 4:50 p.m.), Mr. Lupino, Mr. Palumbo, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante. Also present were Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, and Mr. Votto.**

**Mr. Palumbo called the work session to order at 4:37 p.m. The roll was called.**

**I. PUBLIC BUDGET WORK SESSION REGARDING 2005-2006 SCHOOL BUDGET**

**Mr. Palumbo stated that the committee was meeting tonight to**

determine the budgets cuts. These cuts are necessary to bring the budget down to the \$118, 146,790 which has been allocated to the school department by the City Council. He told the committee that they were given a number of different sheets with breakdowns on them. Mr. Balducci's cover letter gives an explanation of what items are covered by the city directly. He was referring to the \$672,000. Those items he pointed out are marked with an "A" in the left column on the cut sheet. He also gave a breakdown of the Council's allocation to arrive at the \$118 million. There is also a breakdown of the cuts involving the new personnel showing what has been cut and what modifications were made to those cuts. The last document is the suggested cut list. The items on this list are not presented in the same format as last year's cut list. They are given in groups, but they are not ordered to be put back as they were last year. The committee is still involved in negotiations, and until they are complete, the committee cannot say what additional cuts or additions may have to be made because of what transpires in their negotiations. The cut list will take them down to the budget figures which has been allocated by the City Council which the committee must do by law.

Mr. Lupino stated there is an agenda for this meeting and that public speaking is scheduled after the committee's comments and discussion. He noted that there was a time constriction for this session as well. Mr. Palumbo stated that he was holding back public comments until the committee got into the budget because not much could be said at this point. Western Hills Middle School has open

house at 7:00 p.m., so this meeting must be over by 7:00 p.m.

Page 2      May 25, 2005

Mr. Lupino asked that the document with the city analysis dated 5/19/05 be referred to as Exhibit A and that the document dated 5/23/05 as Exhibit B.

Mrs. Ciarlo referred to the Cranston Public Schools' new personnel budget cuts and elaborated on them.

She referred to the .5 position for an EPIC teacher and stated that this is not reducing the program for talented students; it is keeping it at the level of this year. In the budget, there was a proposal for a .5 increase. Administration is saying that this year they cannot afford the increase but they will keep it at level funded.

She referred to the .4 nurse and stated that administration feels that this position is absolutely needed. Given the number of medically fragile students in the district and the requirements to meet their health issues, the district needs an increase of a .4 nurse. This position is still in the budget.

She referred to the .7 ESL teacher position and given the increase in students in the ESL population, this remains in the budget under new personnel.

**There were two psychological interns at 2.0 for approximately \$12,000 each to help the district with the number of psychological testings that are needed to be done throughout the year. They would do it under the supervision of a certified psychologist. These interns are people who are in training. Administration kept these 2.0 positions in the budget at \$25,000.**

**With regard to the 1.0 special education driver, Mrs. Ciarlo stated that given the number of schools and services that must be provided, an additional driver is absolutely needed to accommodate the special education needs, and this is a 1.0 position.**

**With regard to the 1.0 elementary teacher, given the number of retirements and some of the compacting they have been doing, at this time they have taken out of the budget the increase of an elementary teacher of 1.0.**

**Of the reading teachers that administration knows they need, they have requested 1.5, and they are needed for the secondary reform. Administration has reduced that to a budget cut of \$137,024, but in the revised budget they are hoping to get a 1.0 position out of a grant. They are hoping that even though this is a cut to Fund 1, it won't be if they can get it through a proposed grant.**

**Mrs. Ciarlo went on to say that the math coaches are very near and**

dear to their hearts for the implementation of the new math program. The School Committee had added to the budget 3.0 math coaches, and in order to make the budget work, they were cut out. They are hoping to get out of a grant three half-time math coaches, so they will not

Page 3      May 25, 2005

show up on Fund 1 but they will show up in a grant. This will enable administration not to cut the program out but enable them to do it at a reduced level over a multi year period which she thinks is very important.

With regard to the 4.0 special education teachers, administration wanted to have a special education teacher for resource at every elementary school, and they had put in for 4.0, and they cut it back to 2.0. They know they need them but can't afford 4 but are talking about 2. They will be in the revised budget Fund 1.

With regard to the 2.0 aspiring principals, and as much as the district needs training, Mrs. Ciarlo is trying to find creative ways of doing it. There is one person who has been an applicant, and last year the administration had tentatively added it and then had to go back on their agreement. They are trying to work it out whereby this would be only a half position and it wouldn't begin until January 2006. It would go from January 2006 for a half year's cost in this year's coming

**budget. The other half would take place in the beginning of the 2006-2007 budget. It has been reduced from 2 aspiring principals down to half aspiring principal for January 2006.**

**With regard to the literacy teacher assistants, Mrs. Ciarlo stated that she is concerned about this area. In the budget last year, the committee added 10 and then a couple more for a total of approximately 17 assistants part time. Those are still in the budget. This was going to be an increase over and above. If things become any better since they are compacting some classrooms and classroom size will be increasing, more than ever especially in the Kindergarten and first grade classrooms, there should be literacy assistants. Unfortunately, even though it is near and dear to her heart, the district can't afford them right now. However, she is hoping things get better.**

**With regard to the 1.0 custodian/utility for a citywide basis given the needs of the district, this was in the original budget. It was cut and remains cut.**

**By and large, in the budget administration has kept the nurse, kept the ESL teacher, kept the psychological interns, and kept the special education driver. With regard to the math coaches and the reading teachers, they will try to retain them at a reduced level out of grants. Remaining in the budget are instead of 4 special education teachers, two teachers. Instead of 2 aspiring principals, there will be half for**

January 2006. For special education teacher assistants, which she didn't mention before, administration had put in for 8 and they had 5. They know this is always an area of need, and they remained with 5 in the budget. The budget has gone from \$1,443,768 down to \$476,871, and they are attempting to get \$159,829 out of grants.

Mrs. Ciarlo went on to say that some other areas that are near and dear to their hearts, as they sit down and look at organizations for next year and compacting at all levels, they believe that if there figures are correct, and they are constantly reviewing them as

Page 4      May 25, 2005

retirements come in, they are looking at what they need and what they can afford. She believes that tentatively they will try to provide the 1.0 guidance position to Cranston High School East. The students who ordinarily went to Cranston West in the 9th grade will not be going over in 9th grade; they won't be going over until 10th grade. She asked the school to look at the staffing that they had to accommodate those students in grade 9 to see if they could eek out from a combination of retirements and from a need for less staffing, even though some of their classes are high, a 1.0 for Cranston East. They have to find a way to help Western Hills as well. The case load for guidance at Western Hills is higher than it is for Cranston East at this point in time. For people who have certain areas of great concern, they have not cut out of the budget the people who are

retired who are guidance counselors. That doesn't mean that they will be able to restore all of the guidance positions because they clearly need to end up with some concessions as a result of their negotiations or they won't be able to return them, and part of the compacting is due to the fact that they won't be able to afford it. There are approximately eight retirements in guidance for elementary and secondary. They are hoping that they can return and post at least four of those positions. If they can remain with the other four, they will do that. She doesn't want people to think that it has been arbitrarily cut out of the budget.

Mrs. Ciarlo further commented that the library clerks are still in the budget. There is money in the budget, obviously not enough, to buy new texts and materials. As much as she would like to increase and do something about library books, she has to be sure the students know how to read first so that when they go to the library they will know how to read the library books that are there. They have not cut it but kept it at level funding. That is what Exhibits A and B are basically; they are showing level funding and cuts in some areas. But by are large it is level funding. At this point in time, from the point of view of personnel, they don't have on the list the closing of any schools. For those who need to hear it, that is where administration stands right now. She cautioned everyone that much of this is contingent upon how successful they are with a reasonable agreement with all the bargaining units. They are not hiding anything and showing everything that is out there. They are showing where



there are some resources, and she has to recommend some things because it is her job, but does she believe that they should have to compact some of these elementary classrooms, she wishes they didn't have to. She is trying not to go over cap, but in the primary grades, she wanted to keep the numbers down because that is what has made the difference for Cranston throughout all of this. She didn't put it in priority order because they are not of equal importance what were cut out. She suggested to Mr. Palumbo that in her weekly update to the School Committee she will have a new category called "potential changes to the cut list." If there are any changes, she will indicate what they are, and the committee will have a chance to hear about them and voice their concerns before making a move. Right now they are not in the position to do anything because every day people are handing in their retirement letters, and that will continue up through and beyond June 30th. In order for them to retire and get the benefits of the three-year

Page 5      May 25, 2005

agreement they had, they need to get those retirement letters in. Administration does expect more letters. She is unsure where they are coming from. Some people are still doing a lot of hard thinking of what they are going to do. Unless administration and the committee get decent agreements to enable them to do this, the only place that there is real money in the budget is in personnel. She doesn't believe that this is a place where they want to cut back anymore than they

have to.

Mr. Lupino referred to the aspiring principals and asked what duties that aspiring principal would have from September to December and how those duties would be funded from January to June. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that from September to January the aspiring principal will be doing whatever the aspiring principal is doing right now. In other words, if he or she is teaching math, then that person will be teaching math. She is proposing in the budget the cost of an aspiring principal between January and June so that means administration can get someone to take their place from January to June. Mr. Lupino commented that this person will be paid at a regular teacher's salary, and Mrs. Ciarlo said that he was correct. Mr. Lupino added that the \$45,000 included is for the replacement to take those duties from January to the end of the year. He asked if it would necessarily be that amount, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that it could be less if it were a first year teacher who would replace that person. She believes the person is a math teacher right now. Administration doesn't want to cut themselves short, but on the other hand, they want to make sure they have enough to accommodate it. In this way, they haven't cut out truly anything; they have reduced so that they can go back and increase at some point in time. Mrs. Ciarlo added that in order to look at some of the numbers, when she refers to compacting it means that if there is a class of ten Kindergarteners in the morning, and ten in the afternoon, in the past that would be two classes. It will now be one class. Maximum is not reached until they hit twenty-five. That

means that the person who is teaching that class or someone in the bargaining unit will be teaching one place in the morning and another place in the afternoon. The district can no longer afford to have a teacher in one place. If the population is not there, the district can't afford to do it. The district will not have classes of 2/3 splits or 3/4 splits or 4/5 splits. At the present time, there is one ESL classroom at Gladstone School that has for a period of time, and wrongfully so, been a split class. They will try to undo that. If someone asks if there will be split classes, the answer is no, but there will be larger class sizes as a result of class compacting. With regard to compacting, Mr. Lupino asked what would happen in grade 1. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that only Kindergarten would have two schools. As an example, Mr. Lupino asked that if Glen Hills and Woodridge were split up for Kindergarten, and the teacher was teaching morning at Woodridge and afternoon at Glen Hills, would it mean that next year when the Kindergarteners became first graders that one of the classes would be moved to Glen Hills or Woodridge to make a full class. Mrs. Ciarlo responded only if the numbers are there. Right now the only ones that would be going to two schools are itinerants and Kindergarteners where there is enough for one session but not enough for two sessions. There would be one session in school A and in session in school B. It would

still be a 1.0 position, but it would be done in two places. The district

gets more first graders because by that time the students have gone to private schools and then come to public school. There would be no such thing as a first grade teacher spending part of the day in one place and part of the day in another school.

Mrs. Greifer referred to the positions that administration hopes to cover with grant money and asked what would happen if that grant money doesn't materialize. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the district wouldn't have those positions unless they received more money from somewhere else. It is not that they are new grants. They are looking at the way they have used those grants to see if they qualify these positions in the grants. The grant money is available, and they have to make sure they get the grant officer to agree to use it in this type of capacity. This has been done since 1965, and she is very confident that they will be able to do it.

Mr. Palumbo stated that another point should be made that if the \$400,000 from the state does not materialize, or hopefully if more than \$400,000 shows up, there are a couple of things in the budget that are iffy even with the retirements. The committee has to get its budget down to the \$118 million, but there are still iffy things in there. They have to live with them until such time that negotiations are finished and the State tells them where they are.

Mr. Stycos commented that Mrs. Ciarlo had indicated that of the eight special education teacher aides, she was suggesting that they keep

five new positions instead of eight new positions. Mr. Stycos stated that with regard to the aspiring principals, that person would be in the position for a school year and the following year he or she would become a principal. If the aspiring principal is in for one-half year that person would then become a principal after one-half year. Mrs. Ciarlo stated that unless the program is revised, the person would have to complete it. Administration is trying to find a way to afford it over two budget cycles instead of one budget cycle. It would be the same amount of training. As school systems find themselves in more difficult constraints, they are finding it more difficult, as much as they want to and know the value of training aspiring principals, to be able to do it. They are thinking of some creative ways one of which is to create their own academy here. They could be working for the district and Cranston could train some other school systems and gain some revenue at the same time. She is working in cooperation with Rhode Island College to accomplish this. This person will do it the half year unless there was training during the summertime and it provided what they needed so that they would certify those people. They would come back in September and work September to January. Administration just interviewed a candidate for a principalship. That individual just finished in January so now that person is looking for an aspiring principal program for July. Mr. Stycos asked what this person did from January to July. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that two years out the person would go back to their teaching position. There is one person administration said yes to and then had to say no to. That person wouldn't be able to be an aspiring principal until

January.

Page 7      May 25, 2005

The district would put in someone to cover that person's assignment.

They would do that between January and June. Come September, that person would finish the internship. If there were no openings in January, that person would go back to his or her teaching position for the remainder of the year. Mr. Stycos asked the advantage of that rather than waiting until next year because it would disrupt two classes; the students would have a substitute teacher for one-half of the year and the next year the same thing would happen. He asked if it would be better to train them all in one year. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that given the outlook, this is the third year the district has not been able to do this. Administration doesn't want to lose potentially good candidates. When she and Mr. Scherza approach Rhode Island College, they will suggest that the person do it for one-half year and the person comes back, the district has to have some way to show that if the district needs it, that person could be certified by September because usually it happens that way. Right now staggering the position is a money issue only so that they are not taking a full salary out of this year and rather taking it out over two budget years thereby lowering the cost but not eliminating the program. She doesn't want to see the students disrupted, but as people who are out on sick leave, that person could cover some of those classes between now and the end of the year if they couldn't

get the person certified to be a principal by the end of the summer. It is a new concept that has come up to keep the training alive and yet find ways to afford it in very difficult times.

Mr. Stycos commented that he agreed with what Mr. Palumbo said about the retirements. Given that the budget is predicting thirty retirements, and there are fifty-four and nine people who have resigned which has salary savings implications and health care cost implications, that needs to be reworked in the budget. The committee needs to see where that is heading. They need to know the cost and savings to determine better what it will shake out to. Mrs. Ciarlo commented that some of it has been taken to balance the budget now. She doesn't know who will be taking their places of the positions they are filling, and what it will net out to either balancing the budget or in excessive. She dreams of doing some things that they are not currently able to do. Mr. Balducci will supply this information.

Mr. Balducci referred to the city analysis sheet and indicated that as part of the deliberations that took place on Friday, May 6th; these were the components of how to arrive at the proposed budget of \$118 million. The first number is what the Mayor came forth with which is \$114.1 million, and during the City Council deliberations, they adjusted some of the city projections on some city revenue sources. They took money from other areas of their budget and reallocated it to us which is \$1.2 million. Mr. Balducci said that he is referring to it

as new city dollars. There were other budget adjustments they referred to as well. One of them is items the City Council will pay for out of their side of the budget. It amounts to approximately \$672,000. They went through the school department cut list and identified what they believed were capital related items such as in transportation they had budgeted dollars for replacement of

Page 8      May 25, 2005

buses, and in the plant area, they had budgeted for some capital related funds. On top of it, they added textbook purchases at the elementary, middle, and high schools. This included the math and science series. These are the ones school administration originally put forth in their budget. The city suggested that the school department could eliminate those dollars from their side of the ledger, and they will pay for it out of a city capital fund. Mr. Balducci further commented that he doesn't know the specifics of it. He only knows that he does not have to accommodate that expense in his budget. With regard to the city's prior year surplus, Mr. Balducci said that the city is of the opinion that they will finish this fiscal year with a surplus of over \$1 million. Mr. Lupino added that the city has said that the surplus would be approximately \$3.5 million to \$4 million. Mr. Balducci further explained that when the city's books are closed, they will reallocate a piece of the 04-05 surplus and identify it as revenue to the school district. The city is also of the opinion that when the General Assembly finishes their session in early July that the school



department will get at a minimum of an additional \$400,000 in state aid. The city will count that as revenue toward the school department. The other adjustment at the state level is the increase that the school department has to compensate to the teachers' retirement system next year. Everyone knows that there are some pension changes that certain groups are putting forth at the state level. Everyone is of the opinion that they will reduce the obligation next year, and the city is using \$700,000 as the projected relief. Mr. Lupino referred to the city capital fund and noted that the buses are purchased on an as needed basis. He asked if the textbooks could be purchased on July 1st. In response, Mr. Balducci said that he could order the books on July 1st. He spoke to Mr. Woerner today to work out the mechanics of all of this. Because it is the school department's business to purchase the textbooks, the district will secure that end of the purchase by selecting the vendor and number of books to be purchased. Once that is completed, the bill will be sent to the city, and they will compensate the vendor on their side. His office is in the process of putting bid specs together for purchase of used buses and blackboards. They are preparing the specs so that the process can be started while schools are out this summer. The school department will approve the purchase and make sure the work was done and the items received, and he will walk over to City Hall and give them the bill.

Mr. Traficante wanted to confirm in his mind that the budget the City Council approved included as part of the school budget \$1.1 million

of anticipated funds from the State of Rhode Island. Mr. Balducci indicated that he was correct; the \$1.1 million is the \$400,000 of additional state aid and \$700,000 of pension relief. Mr. Traficante said that the School Committee should assume that if the \$1.1 million doesn't come to fruition via the State, then they as a City Council and as a city administration have to make up for that \$1.1 million because it has already been approved by the City Council. Mr. Balducci said that the committee will have to have that conversation with the City Council. Mr. Traficante said that this is rather touchy and unusual, but he hopes they are correct. He added that the City Council has been very generous, and he hopes they are on target.

Page 9      May 25, 2005

Mr. Lupino referred to the capital funds and asked what the invoice says for the books. Mr. Balducci said that the school department will not encumber funds; they will secure the purchase. Most likely the invoice will say Cranston Public Schools because the books will be delivered here as a school district. The purchase order will be issued by the city side and ultimately paid for by the city. He doesn't have to worry about a fiscal note. Mr. Stycos commented that using capital funds to buy textbooks is a little unusual and asked if there was any chance that this may fall apart. Mr. Balducci responded that in speaking with Mr. Woerner he used the definition of a capital related purchase as something that will last for more than one year. Using that criteria, this district does have textbooks that are more than one

year or older. They are comfortable enough in using those funds on the city side for textbook purchases. Mr. Stycos asked if they were bonding it, and Mr. Balducci said that he doesn't believe it is bonded dollars and that would be a gray area to use a capital bonded area to purchase textbooks.

Mrs. Ciarlo commented that it is important during this time that if there are questions from either the committee or the public to please give school administration a call. Sometimes the rumor mill can distort something so much that a person can give themselves tension when it isn't necessary. The school department is doing the best it can. If the school district is to continue its business, they have to go on the assumptions and the information given which says that this is the budget. Part of it was based on the city coming up with additional appropriations. This is their projections, and the school department needs to hold them to live to it. She wants to focus on the school side on how she will make it work for the kids and staff successfully. The school district can't worry about the rest of it.

Mr. Palumbo stated that the committee should be concentrating on getting its budget down to the \$118 million now and then any extra funding they have the committee members can make a list on their own what they would like to see put back in. There are things he would like to see put back in, but the committee has to get it down to the \$118 million first.

**Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Balducci if they were at the \$118,146,790, and Mr. Balducci said that they were at that point. He referred to the back page of the cut list, and it states that the district is in balance with the projected budget.**

**Mr. Traficante commended administration for basically coming up with this potential list of cuts because in doing so many people will be pleased with the fact that the neighborhood school concept remains in tact with no schools being closed. High school sports remain status quo, and there are no cuts to that particular area. The transportation lines remain in tact which was a major concern especially to the elementary school parents. Pupil activity programs also remain in the budget. The areas that got hit the most are textbooks, supplies and materials and library supplies. If**

**Page 10      May 25, 2005**

**the committee is going to replace any line items, he hoped that they would focus on the instructional arena because they would hurt the most in these cuts.**

**With regard to the literacy paras, Mrs. Ciarlo commented that administration would be very late in assigning them because they are going to look at the numbers. They will start with Kindergarten and Grade 1 first, and if the class size is high, and she would be remiss to**

say that if a permit is granted for only one year means that there will be a rescinding of a number of permits because they can't afford to have a permit and pay extra when there is room at the home school or a neighboring school. This will cause some disruption, and parents who have been used to very favorable class sizes at the elementary level will be very disappointed. She is hoping that if money can come their way, they certainly need supplies. They have been hurting with supplies for some time. They are taking a percent off an area that has been cut and is back to the 2001 level, and everything has gone up since that time. It is especially in keeping those numbers down in the very early years when they are talking about teaching literacy. At the same time, they are under the gun to do some things with mathematics, and even though it won't be the best of all times, at least the district will have begun a program that they can add to in the future. Her greatest concern right now is the literacy paras and the supplies and materials. Mrs. Ciarlo thanked the central office staff for all their hard work in putting this budget together.

Mr. Palumbo directed his comments to the library secretaries; many of them had been sending e-mail messages to the committee. He indicated to them that those cuts are not on the table. Mrs. Ciarlo stated that those secretarial positions are in the budget at this time. However, she would be remiss if she did not say again that if all bets are off and the committee and administration don't get concessions in the health care area as they negotiate with the various groups it just won't happen. There are only so many dollars to go around. The

question will come down to, do you want to lose teaching positions or do we all want to share in something we can get by with and hope that things will be better in the future. She commented that she says that with all honesty to them. It doesn't mean that if administration and the committee are here again in August they may have to make some changes. She wanted them to know what these things were contingent upon especially when it comes to secretarial positions, library clerks, etc. They don't need to hear that they are not needed, and they don't need to hear that they are not meaningful. They do need to hear that unless the district gets money from the lottery or people make concessions, they won't be able to do it the way they want to do it. Right now they are in the budget. The only things she talked about was adding positions that they cut out of the budget. It was under new personnel, and they did not fund that.

Mr. Traficante asked to emphasize what the Superintendent said that on the night of the budget presentation Mr. Palumbo clarified the fact that if they did not reach their anticipated goal through negotiations, they are looking at an additional approximately \$1

Page 11      May 25, 2005

million more in cuts. It is crucial that they meet their goal in negotiations as Mrs. Ciarlo just mentioned.

Mrs. Ciarlo commented that she saw some Kindergarten teachers in

the audience. She has had a long and pleasant relationship with them, and she knows they are a fearsome group when they get upset about something. She wanted them to know that last year when the administration and the committee were trying to reduce the numbers, they were able to support keeping the level of funding. The problem this year is that the number of students aren't there, and there will be more traveling on the part of Kindergarten than there has been in the past in order to fulfill the district's obligation. Those things may change, and in the past, they have had them and were going to cut them out. Now, before opening a room, they want to be sure that the students are actually there. There will be some clustering. If it becomes too large to cluster, then there will be discussion as to whether or not a classroom should be opened. That will not come until probably early summer. There have been a number of retirements, and certainly many of the retirements have to be replaced.

Mr. Lupino asked when the committee would receive those consolidations, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that it would not be in time for Jamboree. Administration is working on them now, but the danger is when information is given out ahead of time. The frenzy would be absolutely crazy. The numbers change by the day. Mr. Lupino stated that his concern is not about the teachers but the parents of Kindergarten children who typically at this time of year have to reserve space in alternative sessions. As an example, a parent needs to know if their child is going to be morning or

afternoon. The principals must be receiving many calls asking if a child is morning or afternoon. There are waiting lists on many of these places. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that administration will be meeting with the principals before to go over the compacting just as soon as they feel the numbers are stable. After that, they will be generating the list, first with the seniority list, out to the schools. They want to make sure that the principals know first and that they have the accurate number of students who have registered. Between May and August, there are always a number of registrations, and the district has to be able to accommodate those as well. The principals will confer with the parents so that they parents will know if it is a morning or afternoon session. If the parents want a particular session, it may not be at the home school but at the neighboring school. The district tries as much as possible to accommodate, but they won't be able to be as accommodating as they have in the past. Mr. Lupino asked if this means the parents would be responsible for transportation, and Mrs. Ciarlo said that if the school department clusters them the school department is responsible for the transportation. Mr. Lupino remarked that Mrs. Ciarlo had said that if a parent wanted to choose an afternoon over a morning session at another school that would be similar to asking for a permit and the parent would have to provide the transportation. Mrs. Ciarlo said that she would consider a parent's request for an afternoon session over a morning to be a



cluster situation if the parent wanted an afternoon session and no afternoon session was running at the home school. She would consider it to be a permit situation if a parent said they wanted morning Kindergarten at school X because her mother-in-law lives near there.

Mr. Votto stated that administration plans to meet with the union on the Friday before which is June 3rd. The list will be out to the schools in the teachers' hands on June 6th which would have implications on the impacting. The Jamboree will take place on June 9th.

Mrs. Ciarlo encouraged people to attend the Jamboree because it is a unique gathering. Mr. Votto commented that it will take place in the Hope Highlands auditorium. It is traumatic for people when they make changes, but yet so many people are happy when they make the change. She invited people to attend the Jamboree. Mr. Votto commented that the retirement reception for retired teachers will take place on June 7th in the Cranston West library at 3:30 p.m. Mrs. Ciarlo added that this is a very pleasant experience.

Mr. Lupino stated that the committee has stated the seriousness of some cuts, and at the same time brushing over the seriousness of some of the cuts. He referred to the physical education equipment

repairs, and it appears that the original amount of \$2,000 is being cut \$1,900 leaving an amount to work with of \$100. As someone who often does home repairs around his home, there is not much one can do with \$100. He added that he was trying to bring light to some of the cuts the committee was dealing with. He asked Dr. Cardoza how the school department would repair a broken basketball net if it is destroyed. He asked if the committee would encourage the basketball team from their fund raising to submit repairs for that. Dr. Cardoza explained that every year he has one gymnasium inspected every year which is approximately an \$800 fee. Whatever is found to be repaired, that is another several hundred dollars. With \$100 left now, it would take care of something minor in the gym. If something happens at an athletic event or if a breakdown is related to an athletic event, he tries to find the money in the athletic budget by shifting around. The last thing he does is go to Mr. Balducci and explains to him what needs to be repaired, and he looks in the overall budget to find the money. Mr. Lupino stated that it is not as grim as it sounds. There is an emergency mechanism whereby he could get a basketball hoop or backboard. Dr. Cardoza added that they will miss not having one gymnasium inspected this coming year. They will have to delay that inspection for at least one year. The company they hire to inspect checks all the nuts and bolts for the overhead supports which would be basketball supports, etc. Mr. Lupino asked if they are ever in violation of the Interscholastic League for not repairing a scoreboard, and Dr. Cardoza responded that it is required that they have a working scoreboard but it can be of any standard. Even a flip

score board is acceptable. Mr. Lupino asked if there were any physical education and athletic related cuts that were very serious, and Dr. Cardoza said that there were

Page 13      May 25, 2005

none to his knowledge at this time. He has been having a side conversation with Mr. Zisseron regarding the pool. There is some grout in the tiles that are lifting from the pool. He knows of no emergencies nor does he foresee any.

Mr. Lupino referred to Exhibit B and noted that library materials, particularly library books, were hit pretty hard. He asked if a formula was used to reduce these amounts. He noted that in the elementary schools they were cut in half and another formula for the middle and high schools. In response, Mr. Balducci said that there was no formula. Library Services put forth a budget of what they needed. Unfortunately, in coming up with \$3 million, administration had to look at everything. They gave them no less than what they are getting this year. That money may be allocated differently based on the number of students at one particular school, but he would leave that up to Ms. Bryan when this budget becomes formal, and in the first revision in the fall, there will be a conversation of shifting dollars from one particular school to another. Mrs. Ciarlo added that there use to be a grant in the past where they allocated a head count of so much per student, and Ms. Bryan and her staff could buy books with

that money. Administration is looking to see if there are any grant monies that could be used to allocate money for elementary and middle school libraries. The elementary book collection is very old and should be updated, and there isn't money to do it.

Mr. Scherza wished to respond to Mr. Lupino's question regarding budget cuts. There is a consistency throughout the budget. The library materials were treated the same as other things such as textbooks and supplies. They have basically been level funded from last year's level. Mr. Lupino stated that they have been level funded and not level service funded. This distinction has been made before. He explained that it is funded at the same exact dollar level of the prior year. Mr. Scherza added that there are a few exceptions in the budget.

Mr. Lupino stated that one thing that consistently comes up, particularly at the School Buildings Committee meetings, is the issue of the Cranston East addition project and the fact that administration must move from the Briggs Building. Although he knows the movement of finding space is under a capital item, there has to be some incidental costs related to it that are not under the capital budget. He asked if there was a contingency fund in this budget to handle some of those items. Mr. Scherza responded that there is nothing in a contingency type budget. In a discussion today, they made a decision to have the School Committee place it on their next agenda for discussion. Mr. Lupino added that the real projected plan

is to have administration move out of the Briggs Building no later than next summer. Mr. Palumbo stated that when \$3 million has to be cut from the budget, items have to be cut and level funded. He doesn't think there are any items that wouldn't be hurting anything. It is hurting everything. He would be looking at things in music equipment and repairs. Last year it was cut to nothing, and this year it was cut 100%. If one wants to look at this budget and ask if something is serious, it is not hard to find those areas. When \$3.1 million has to be cut, it must be

Page 14      May 25, 2005

done. The committee will keep everything they feel is critical, and the others they take something from or put them back to last year's level. Mr. Lupino added that the problem the committee consistently has is very few members of the public attend the meetings. The information doesn't get transferred to the public until later on. It was the same situation when middle school sports were cut. There is never any input, and the committee is lacking on their side projecting out what the cuts actually mean, and the attitude of the average taxpayer is that the school department always manages. It is becoming increasingly difficult to do the things they need to do, never mind the things they would like to do with these types of operations. It is unfortunate that Cranston is on the top, and the only place to go is down. As Mrs. White has said in the past, it is the beginning of the end when the committee has to cut these types of things.

**Mr. Stycos commented that the Director of the Library Media Services has been budgeted at \$10,000, and in the last two years it has been eliminated in the general fund budget, and grant money has been used to pay that \$10,000. It is again in the regular operating budget, and he asked if the committee could predict that it would again be funded for the third year in a row through a grant and that money could be put into library books. Mr. Balducci responded that he could not guarantee it for the next fiscal year. The school district is in the process of writing all the grants for the next fiscal year. Those have to be reviewed by the different state agencies, and the district receives the awards after the fiscal year starts. He couldn't guarantee that a grant would pick up that amount of money. Mrs. Ciarlo added that they tend to grant them sooner if a district is running a summer component. As the committee reads over this list of cuts, if they as a group feel, if and when this money becomes available, they would like to have it go to library books, then that is what administration will do. They have not been able to fund the materials. She would leave it up to the discretion of the director and her staff as to how they spend the money for library materials. Mr. Stycos stated that if the district is asking for the same grant for the third year in a row, he would think there is a good chance they would get it and would like to see that happen.**

**Mr. Traficante asked if there were any other line items in this budget that would be potentially covered by grants in the future. Mr.**

Balducci responded that it would then become an issue of supplanting. If new dollars are being added to a grant budget, it won't be an issue. If Fund 1 is picking up the tab for that expense and administration chooses to put it in a grant in a subsequent year, the federal law says it can't be done because it then becomes a supplanting issue.

Mr. Stycos referred to the return from leave account and indicated that it is budgeted at \$225,000. In the last two years' actuals, it has been \$74,000 and \$67,000. He suggested that if administration did a finer analysis of those costs, the committee would be able to free up some money for some of the items on the cut list. He believed the number comes from figuring if everyone is out who is out on leave now comes back then there will be a salary increase of \$225,000 because someone will be coming back

Page 15      May 25, 2005

at step 10 rather than their replacement at step 1. From the past experience, not everyone comes back. There are generally a couple of people who are out on leave, and they stay out on leave. Using some historical data, he thinks they predict that not everyone is coming back. Secondly, there is nowhere in the budget that projects savings for new people going out on leave. The district projects the cost for people on leave coming back, but the savings for those people who are now working going out on leave are never included in

the budget. If the historical data was checked, over a five-year period it may be determined that there is a savings and that savings could be put into program. He asked administration to fine tune the return from leave account using those two ideas and some others so that the committee can be a little bit more conservative as to what it is going to cost and free up some dollars. Mrs. Ciarlo asked when a teacher has to notify administration that he or she is returning, and Mr. Votto stated that by contract it is sixty days prior to the return date which would be sometime in July. He could probably create a document that is more finite than the committee presently has. Mr. Votto indicated that he would supply this information for the next budget session.

Mr. Stycos stated that \$100,000 is budgeted for unemployment costs. Over the last five years' actuals, not including this year, it has never been over \$50,000. He asked if administration knew what the unemployment costs would be for the current budget, and Mr. Balducci responded that due to the number of layoffs being incurred this fiscal year, the district will be spending approximately \$180,000 for unemployment. It looks as if the district will be spending \$180,000 and not \$200,000. Mr. Stycos asked if was worth looking at the \$100,000 given the financial situation and the district won't be laying off large numbers of personnel. Mr. Balducci responded that thirty-three were originally laid off, and ten were brought back. His concern is that they are still in the deliberation stages of this budget. He would prefer to leave the full \$100,000 because there may be some



positions depending upon where they end up that he will have to accommodate. To take \$20,000 out now, he may be coming back to the committee later saying that he needs it. He has no new information that he didn't have in January.

Mr. Stycos mentioned the extra truant officer that Mr. Lupino had introduced in a resolution at a previous meeting. At the next meeting, he would like to hear why Mr. Lupino picked part-time working hours for this person. He is not convinced that it is the right thing to do, but he would like to hear about it. Mr. Lupino responded that his resolution was left on the table at the last School Committee meeting.

He will make the motion at the next meeting to bring it off the table for discussion. Mrs. Ciarlo stated that since this was placed on the agenda and since a story appeared in the newspaper about it, the Cranston Police have offered to be of greater assistance to the school department. They have been doing some investigations. She asked the committee to remember that she would like to see money set aside for a part-time auditor. Neither the truant officer nor the part-time auditor are presently in the budget. If the committee can find a way to accomplish what they want to do through the help of the Cranston

Police and what the school district are doing, she suggested that the committee see how they can get the money for the part-time auditor

position before hiring the truant officer. However, it is worthy of discussion. She hoped that administration could find out in more detail exactly what the police department can do to aid the school department. Mr. Scherza remarked that Chief McGrath was quite gracious in offering his help and left it pretty open ended. He has had discussions with Mr. Jocelyn from the City Board of Canvassers, and they will be working with administration to do verifications. As a result of this issue coming forward publicly in the media, the district has been able to get more support and resources to help, and the school department will be working in concert to help the Board of Canvassers to clean up their list as well. Mr. Lupino noted that the trial run of central registration this summer may be an indication of whether or not they want to continue it throughout the year because if there is an office dedicated to it with resources and a communication with the police department, more may be caught even before they register. Mrs. Ciarlo added that resources cost money. Right now they are trying to use one of the clerical positions so that someone could start in that position. It will be integrated with School Max which is the new software program for student information systems which will be far more efficient than the doing thereof. It is worth a discussion, but she wants to be cautious before investing in another part-time attendance officer given the other things that the district may be able to get in other ways. Mr. Stycos remarked to Mrs. Ciarlo that she seemed to be saying that she would like to see how this works out with the police department first. Mrs. Ciarlo would like it reduced to writing what the district will do and what the police

department will do to see what that would cover. If there is too much lacking, the committee and administration can talk about it again. There are 11,000 students and only one part-time truant officer.

Mr. Stycos stated that since this budget was passed the committee voted to increase the summer school fees by \$20.00 per person. He believed at that time there were 500 students in summer school. That would be a \$10,000 revenue increase that could be budgeted into some good things.

Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Zisseron if the school department is reimbursed for damage if an organization rents a building and they destroy something. Mr. Zisseron responded that the group renting the building is responsible for any damage. They will pay the cost to replace or repair whatever has to be done. It happens very infrequently. He is very selective in the rentals, and keeps it to local groups. The local youth groups watch their kids, and they know they are responsible if something does happen.

Mr. Balducci responded to Mr. Stycos's question regarding summer school and indicated that this past summer the district collected \$62,000 in summer school revenue. Currently that line item is budgeted at \$55,000 for next year. This is an area they can look at to determine the amount of money they will be bringing in next summer.

**Mr. Stycos referred to page 7 of the cut list, charter school tuitions. He said that originally it was projected that the number of children in charter schools would go from 135 students to 160 students. Now it is being stated that it will remain at 135. Mr. Balducci stated that between Cranston's charter school students and residents attending charter schools throughout the city, there are approximately 160. The change has been made to the number of students attending Cranston's charter school which was originally booked at 150, and it was revised down to 130. That \$100,000 saved is approximately \$5,000 x a reduction of 20 students attending the CPS/NEL Charter School. He meets monthly with the board of directors of the charter school, and this is the time of year the recruitment is going on. He may have to revisit it so he can't give the answer this evening. Mr. Traficante elaborated that this year for the first time since there is overcrowding at Cranston West many of the 8th grade students who applied for the vocational school are not being allowed to go to Cranston West in the 9th grade, and they are remaining at Cranston East. Many of these students may or may not apply to the charter school who have not done so in the past. Right now they don't know. They are still recruiting, and it won't be finished until the latter part of June when they will have a better idea of what the population figures will be. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the following year if the students so desire they can go to Cranston West if they are accepted into the Career and Technical Center as 10th graders. Mr. Stycos stated that**

everyone knows that he has not been a big fan of the charter school. He is concerned that the Cranston Public Schools is participating in the recruitment effort for the charter school of which the school district is a partner. The district is making it easier for someone to go to the charter school. Every time that is done, the district loses \$5,000 from its budget. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that they are Cranston students who are being educated there. If it were an independent charter school that came from somewhere else, then the district would be losing the student. Because the district is a partner with them, those are Cranston students. Administration is looking for better ways to educate them. This is a better way of educating them and meeting their needs. They are doing it through the charter school, and it is a transfer of money. The district would have to pay \$10,000 for them if they were at Cranston High School East. It isn't the same as an independent charter school; it is a charter school that is part of a partnership which is an integral part of Cranston Public Schools, hence the name. Mr. Stycos stated that he realized it was a partnership they are involved with, but the bottom line impact to the budget is the same whether someone goes to Textron Academy, but the district is encouraging people to make the move which helps the bottom line of what should be spent on everyone else. He realizes they are Cranston students, but there are also students who attend St. Paul's and many other schools.

Mr. Palumbo stated that this is an outstanding charter school. He thinks it will end up being a model for other charter schools. If five or

ten students were taken out of Cranston East or Cranston West, one can't say that they have saved a certain amount of money. However, in discussing the numbers they are talking about, less faculty will be utilized along with less supplies. This is a group of students and not five or ten

Page 18      May 25, 2005

students. Aside from the fact that they are getting an excellent education in an area that they will be happy with for the rest of their lives, when one takes numbers this large, there is a savings. Mrs. Ciarlo asked them to keep in mind that many are special education students. She asked Mr. Stycos if he would like to pay \$5,000 or \$40,000 or \$50,000 to attend a special placement. There are a number of these students that the district would otherwise lose. That is the same reason for having the AEP as an alternative. She wants the Cranston students to graduate successfully from high school, and in addition for these students, they not only get a good education and are able to stay in school, they have opportunities that other kids don't have when they graduate. She sees this as an asset and certainly not as a liability. She suggested that the committee have further discussion regarding this. Mr. Traficante pointed out that the Career and Technical Center is supposed to be a state run institution, and the state broke their promise and backed away from subsidizing these schools properly. He believes this school district is paying the entire expense for the building. In addition, the students who attend

the vocational school who are Cranston students are being subsidized by Cranston as well because the state is giving the district one-half the amount to educate those students. The City of Cranston is subsidizing those students in a vocational school that is supposed to be state operated and financed. Mr. Scherza added that if one were to live in a community in the Blackstone Valley and students from that area went to a state operated vocational school as Cranston's is, the community would not pay anything; the state would pay 100% of the cost for the student attending there. In Cranston, it doesn't happen that way. This district is treated differently even though it is in the same state system and a state operated career and technical school. They don't give the district 100% of the funding for faculty, staff, maintenance, and student subsidy.

Mrs. Ciarlo asked the committee that between now and the next time they meet if they have some questions or would like more information to please e-mail Mr. Balducci. The committee could have those answers ready for the next budget session. There are two sessions to discuss these cuts, and this will allow the public to give input as well.

Mr. Lupino indicated that he is not involved in contract negotiations. He asked the scenario impact on the budget if a contract is not entered into for this coming year. He asked if the money would have to be maintained in abeyance because it might be awarded

retroactively at some point in time or is it taken as a cut to the existing budget. He was unsure if he could ask this question because of negotiations. Mr. Palumbo responded that the question he was asking is a very iffy question because it depended upon how it would be handled in the following year. He hoped it would not be the case. If there is no contract, they would work to rule. In that particular case, the medical and raise have to be looked into as to how it effects the budget. Whether or not the committee would want to put something in abeyance and hold because next time they would give it as a pay that is retroactive, that is strictly negotiations; and it shouldn't be discussed in this forum. It is something to be concerned about, however. Mr. Lupino

Page 19      May 25, 2005

stated that if the committee doesn't enter into a contract, not only is there an amount that is projected for that potential increase but there is no raise in the current year because there is no contract. Mr. Palumbo stated that he was correct. Mr. Traficante added that if the committee doesn't negotiate a contract, it will have a severe negative impact on their budget. If they don't negotiate a contract where there is cost sharing, it will have a tremendous negative impact on the budget.

Mr. Lupino asked when the committee would be voting on the cuts, and Mr. Palumbo indicated that the committee would be voting on the



adjusted budget on June 15th. Mrs. Ciarlo added that this is the committee's regular work session but there will be a short meeting to adopt the budget. An additional budget work session will be held next Wednesday, June 1st, at 4:30 p.m. here at Western Hills to discuss the budget and to get public input.

Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Zisseron to share with the committee the dogwood trees that are being planted at the various schools throughout the city. Mr. Zisseron explained that the Garden City contractor had taken down too many trees at Chapel View. They made a financial settlement with the city and the Cranston Conservation Society. The Society gained some dollars from that settlement. They called and asked if the school department would be interested in planting one tree per school. He asked that dogwoods be planted. They are in the process of planting at eighteen schools eighteen dogwood trees. It is a pretty tree and gives nice blossoms in the spring. They don't grow too big.

Mr. Stycos mentioned that he had a meeting on Friday with Bob Clarkin, Henry Shelton and a person from the State of Rhode Island regarding the summer lunch program which is free bag lunches handed out in neighborhoods where 50% of the children are receiving free and reduced lunch. For Cranston this means Edgewood Highlands, Gladstone and Arlington Schools. That program will run similar to the way it ran last year. The lunches will be provided by the Providence School Department. The Recreation Department will be

handing them out, and they have been working on getting notices out to children who attend those schools. He asked if there was some way to notify the Park View and Bain students who live in those neighborhoods to get them on the mailing list, and Mrs. Ciarlo said that they could get them on the mailing list.

## **II. PUBLIC SPEAKING ON AGENDA ITEM**

Donna Vascancellos, 766 Laten Knight Road – She indicated that the budget had \$18,000 allocated for middle school sports, and she assumed it was for the intramural program. According to the cut list, it has been eliminated. Mr. Palumbo responded that

Page 20      May 25, 2005

intramural middle school sports are still in the budget. The cut list has been changed since it went on line. Mr. Balducci stated that the new cut list will be put on the website tomorrow.

Moved by Mr. Traficante, seconded by Mr. Lupino and unanimously carried that the budget work session be adjourned.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at

**6:25 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Anthony J. Lupino**

**Clerk**

**To: Catherine M. Ciarlo**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

**From: Joseph A. Balducci**

**Subject: Proposed 2005-2006 Budget Cut List**

**Date: May 24, 2005**

**Attached for your review and discussion is the proposed 2005-2006 budget cut list. This document uses last year's format and as such allows the reader to compare budget cuts over a two-year period exclusive of any priority order.**

**Furthermore, as highlighted on several pages of the attached document, the letter '(A)' represents those budget areas in which the City is paying for the expenditure directly from City budget sources.**

**In conclusion, if upon review of this document there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.**

**Thank You**

**C: Cranston School Committee**

**Budget Links listed below:**

**2005-2006 Budget Cuts**

**2005-2006 City Budget Analysis**

**2005-2006 Personnel Cuts**